The intersection of life’s passions leads to trip

FPU professor takes sabbatical to Native American village

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It was in the northernmost territory of Canada that Jason Little was able to merge all of his passions into one unforgettable experience.

The 59-year-old Franklin Pierce University marketing professor spent the month of July on sabbatical on Baffin Island in the Nunavut Territory to mentor young business entrepreneurs and research Native American business practices, merging his love of the wilderness, Native American culture, business, and mentoring.

“It’s a compelling intersection of my life, where all of my interests have met,” Little said. “I don’t know how many people have the opportunity to reach this intersection, but I’m blessed.”

In many ways, the concept for the trip was rooted in Little’s love of canoeing and paddling.

Little, who has been paddling “for many years,” has done canoeing trips throughout New England and Canada. In the summer of 2008, Little paddled the 600-mile long Kazan River in Nunavut, a trip that ended at a small, Inuit settlement.

“It was extremely powerful, it was a vast landscape… it’s very easy to get lost if you aren’t paying attention,” Little said.

Much like his love of paddling, Little can trace his interest in Native American culture back to is youth.

“My parents recently stumbled upon an old research report I did in the first grade that had to deal with Eskimos. I pretty near fell apart when I saw that – I feel like things came full circle,” Little said.

“... I’m fascinated with a lot of things about the culture – their connection with the Earth, the creativity, and the artwork that comes out of the

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“Over time, it was great. I felt I was able to develop personal relationships with the mentees I was with,” Little said.

Now that he has returned, Little is preparing a research study – the topic of which he believes may be the first of its kind.

The study focuses specifically on online marketing communication used by Inuit-owned organizations.

Little interviewed a dozen business leaders during his week in Iqaluit in order to examine how Nunavut businesses use marketing and communications and how things could be improved.

“Any government publication has to be printed in three languages: English, French, and Inuktitut, which is the Inuit language. You can imagine how a marketing concept – if you are trying to communicate a slogan or a marketing message – you have to have it translated into three different languages,” Little said. “It’s a challenge in the territory, how to balance that cultural identity.”

Little has also been able to weave his experiences into his teaching at Franklin Pierce.

In the spring 2018 semester, Little worked with six undergraduate students – members of the university’s small business advisory group – to research marketing communication utilized by Inuit-owned businesses.

“My love of mentoring, that’s why I teach. I enjoy working with people who learn, I’m a true believer in lifelong learning,” Little said.

“To be able to mentor not only my students at Franklin Pierce University but to be able to replicate that with another culture – it was great to be able to have that opportunity.”

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